



Remarks of
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Southern Legislative Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana

August 6, 2002

I would like to thank you for having me here this morning to join you in this discussion of transportation issues.

Secretary Mineta asked me to extend his warm personal regards to each of you, and to wish all of you a productive conference.

I want to devote my remarks this morning to three topics: first, the efforts to improve transportation security in the wake of last September's terrorist attacks; second, the crucially important job of reauthorizing our federal surface transportation programs; and finally, the Bush Administration's plans for strengthening intercity passenger rail service.

But I also want to reserve a significant portion of our time this morning to listen to your concerns and try to answer any questions you might have.

Transportation Security

As you know, in just over a month, the nation will observe the first anniversary of the tragic and devastating events of September 11. Before 9-11, the Department viewed transportation security as *one* of our strategic goals. From that day forward, we have made security a critical ingredient in everything we do.

President Bush has directed us to build a transportation security system that will provide a strong defense against the terrorist threat. Recognizing that American social and economic life depends upon an assurance of security in the air, on the ground, on our rivers and at our ports, the federal government, in close cooperation with State and local officials, has embarked on a new mission that has been a stunning success in timeliness and coordination. Today, I can tell you with confidence that transportation security is at its highest levels in the history of our nation, and it will be higher still in the weeks and months ahead.

As a part of that effort, the Bush Administration worked with Congress to pass the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001. This law makes security for all modes of transportation, for the first time, a responsibility of the federal government.

Through the establishment of the Transportation Security Administration, we have made enormous strides towards an intelligent and responsive security system tied closely to our highly developed and crucial transportation infrastructure.

The TSA has successfully placed federal security directors at many of our nation's busiest airports, and intends to have FSDs assigned to all 429 commercial airports soon. The FSDs will be our personal representatives on the ground, responsible for ensuring the safety of our skies and helping fulfill DOT's role in keeping America moving.

By this November, assuming that funding is available, the TSA will have hired tens of thousands of new employees to screen passengers and baggage at all commercial airports nationwide.

We will also have a security network of trained law enforcement officers, new detection technologies, and an unprecedented number of federal air marshals flying in planes that have strengthened cockpits.

Advanced screening systems have been delivered to many airports to provide agents with the necessary technology to evaluate potentially threatening items, and more are on the way. Air travel today is safer than at any point in our nation's history.

The aviation sector was not the only focus of our efforts to promote homeland security. We have also made significant strides on our roadways, in public transportation, and at our ports.

For instance, our Federal Highway Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Railroad Administration are all working closely with state and local transportation officials to conduct vulnerability assessments and to establish protection strategies for critical surface and maritime transportation infrastructure.

We also initiated a program called E-Seals that will enable the tracking of commercial container shipments from their point of inspection at seaports to their point of clearance at U.S. land border crossings.

President expects us to develop an *efficient* approach to transportation security, one that avoids unnecessary and unreasonable obstacles to legitimate trade and travel. Transportation is vital to our economic well-being, and so we must be constantly mindful, as we tighten up the security of the system, that we have an obligation to maintain the system's efficiency.

Without a safe *and* efficient aviation sector, American business slows to a crawl. Unless our efforts to monitor freight movements at our borders are timely – sensitive to the urgency of freight shipments in our just-in-time economy – the damage to our economic vitality could be severe.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization

In 1999, transportation-related goods and services contributed \$980 billion to the economy, roughly 10.7% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Every day, improvements in the transportation infrastructure are being made. Every day, the rate of economic growth in this nation is enhanced by better roads, better river usage, and better transit systems.

And these advances are, in large measure, your success stories. Your leadership and insight at the State level helps to make transportation projects succeed.

However, for you and other state and local officials to continue to bolster our Nation's essential transportation infrastructure, the partnership between you and the federal government must continue.

As you know, the deadline for reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, TEA-21, is swiftly approaching. We must work together to craft a successor to TEA-21 that continues the progress we have made as well as develops innovative ways to improve upon the many successes of TEA-21.

As I see it, TEA-21's major successes lay in four areas:

First, it increased the resources devoted to transportation infrastructure by over 40 percent by linking spending to tax revenues, and provided increased flexibility to States and communities to tailor their efforts to meet their unique needs.

Second, it guaranteed that annual highway trust fund receipts would be spent.

Third, the increased funding improved highway funding equity among the States by ensuring that no State received less than 90.5 percent of the funds it contributed to the Highway Trust Fund.

Fourth, it strengthened the federal commitment to transit by significantly increasing funding for that program.

The dramatically increased funding under TEA-21 also enhanced mobility by upgrading the condition of highways, particularly the National Highway System, and transit systems. As a direct result of the increased spending provided in TEA-21, overall highway system conditions – as measured by pavement condition, ride quality, alignment adequacy, bridge ratings, and the condition of rail transit assets – all have improved.

Additionally, since enactment of TEA-21, the Department of Transportation has awarded a total of \$729 million in highway *safety* grants. For example, between FY 1999 and FY 2002, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) awarded \$210 million in seat belt incentive grants and over \$113 million for innovative seat belt programs. Between June 1998 and June 2001, seat belt use had increased from 65 percent to 73 percent, saving an estimated 12,000 lives annually.

Furthermore, TEA-21 placed an unprecedented emphasis on developing a seamless, intermodal transportation system that links highways, rail, transit, ports and airports.

I could spend all day telling you about the exciting success stories that TEA-21 has helped to create. Each of you can undoubtedly identify a number of projects in your state made possible by TEA-21 dollars. Across the nation, the steps forward that we have taken together are phenomenal.

We want to build on those successes. With that in mind, the Department of Transportation has already begun consulting with both Houses of Congress, state and local officials, tribal governments, and stakeholders in shaping TEA-21's successor.

In that regard, I want to alert you to the ongoing electronic town hall meeting the Department hosts on its web site. This is one way of keeping stakeholders informed about the process and, more importantly, of receiving the public's thoughts about reauthorization.

You and your constituents can access this site at www.dot.gov, and then clicking on "surface reauthorization."

In addition, the Department has established an intermodal process to develop surface transportation legislative proposals for reauthorization. A number of intermodal working groups have already identified key issues and programmatic options for consideration.

Secretary Mineta has developed core principles for reauthorization that speak to the need and importance of transportation to the economic and social lives of all Americans. Let me mention a few of them:

- We must continue to assure adequate and predictable funding for investment in the Nation's surface transportation system, including public transit.
- We must preserve funding flexibility to allow the broadest application of funds to the best transportation solutions identified by our state and local partners.
- We must build on the intermodal approaches of ISTEA and TEA-21.
- We must expand and improve the programs of innovative financing, so as to encourage private sector investment in the transportation system, and look for other inventive means to augment existing revenue streams.
- We must re-emphasize the security of the Nation's surface transportation system, providing the means and the mechanisms to perform risk assessment and analysis, incident identification, response, and when necessary, evacuation.
- And, we must continue to make substantial improvements in safety.

Every man, woman and child in our country has the right to expect us to provide a safe, accessible, affordable and reliable transportation system. What's more, we owe our citizens a return on their investment in transportation, through the fares and taxes they pay.

In shaping this surface transportation reauthorization bill, we must maximize the safety and security of all Americans, even as we enhance their mobility, reduce congestion, and grow the economy. These are not incompatible goals; indeed, the lessons of TEA-21 demonstrate that all of these values are appropriate goals of national transportation policy and that they reinforce each other: it is possible to have a transportation system that is safe and secure, efficient and productive.

Passenger Rail Service

Finally, let me briefly address the issue of intercity passenger rail service. As you know, Congress created Amtrak in 1970 as a for-profit corporation. From this inception, policymakers have had an expectation that has proved elusive – the hope of operating a national passenger rail system on a self-sustaining basis.

The last three decades have proven that we need a new plan if we are to maintain the availability of reliable intercity passenger rail service in America.

Intercity passenger rail service *is* an essential part of the Nation's transportation system. But it can never reach its potential unless we abandon the fiction that passenger rail services can be self-sufficient without fundamental reform.

Secretary Mineta recently outlined several ideas to broaden the debate, while providing a benchmark for gauging the acceptability of various prescriptions now being offered by Congress. In a nutshell, this approach would place passenger rail on the same footing, at long last, as other modes of transportation.

We believe a new intercity passenger rail policy should be based on a strong foundation of state and federal planning that clearly identifies costs, benefits and funding approaches of passenger rail, designs services that complement and connect to other passenger modes, and thinks through practical implementation problems -- such as environmental and operational issues -- before launching projects.

State and local governments are major participants in developing and implementing transportation infrastructure investments like highways and airports. So it should come as no surprise that a central element of the Administration's vision entails a partnership with the nation's governors and other state and local leaders to support intercity passenger rail.

In fact, I hardly think I need to point out to you the necessity of a vibrant partnership between the Department of Transportation and all state and local leaders. Our cooperation is essential to finding innovative and successful ways to address the transportation issues of the 21st Century. It is our charge to work together to provide each American with broad opportunities to move about this nation freely.

Thank you for your efforts and for your time this morning. I would enjoy answering any questions you might have.

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